ILLNESS CALLS A HALT

175 Some time in the days of our earliest Edwards, a princess of
361 Baltistán married the reigning prince of Hunza. For the last
712 hundred years or so the direct route to Baltistán has been completely blocked by advancing glaciers, but for centuries before, the two countries had been in communication with each other. Hunza consisted then of three small villages only: Áltít and Ganesh on the river cliffs, and Báltít high above. The princess's father sent with the bride an army of Balti masons, carpenters, and craftsmen, who built the two forts of Áltít and Báltít as part of the royal dowry, and to-day they still stand proudly on their cliffs, impregnable to assault,
[171] centres of ancient ceremonial. To this day, too, the Hunzukuts modestly attribute all their simple arts to Balti influence.

173 The original inhabitants of Hunza proper are said to be
643 descended from three soldiers of Alexander the Great, who were left behind sick, presumably plus their womenfolk, and thus while their comrades marched on became the founders of the three first villages in this inhospitable region. Like so many royal houses in Central Asia, the family that has ruled for more than six centuries in Hunza and Nagir likes to claim descent from Alexander himself. But while the Mir of Nagir, Sir Sikander (= Alexander) Khan still upholds this tradition, we noticed that the shrewder Mir of Hunza—who must have seen many a courteously-veiled smile greet this familiar genealogy—shied off the topic.

What seems probable is that the royal family is not in origin of the same stock as the people, and that it may well—as tradition asserts—have come from Persia at some prehistoric date. What is certain is that it can trace its authentic ancestry as far back as can the House of Windsor.

173 There may well be truth in the legend of the European
● 144 descent of the Hunza Burusho, for in temperament and looks our Hunza friends have nothing of the "Oriental" about them. Take from them the very lightly bronzed complexion, "the shadow'd livery of the burnished sun," to which at this altitude they are "neighbour and near bred," and you could transplant them without incongruity to the moors of Yorkshire or the Scottish lowlands.

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

CHAPTER 30

Who Are the Hunzans?

I HAVE HEARD the people of Hunza referred to as Hunzans, Hunzukuts, Hunzawals and Hunzas. They prefer to be called Hunzukuts. 101

However, in my writing I am referring to them as Hunzans. I do this strictly as a matter of simplification. I find it easy to say and easy to remember and I also believe it to be the most phonetical of all the terms given.

The Mir claims that the rulers of Hunza were and are direct descendants of Alexander the Great. I could find no proof to either confirm or refute this statement. But it is generally believed that not only the Mir, but the people of Hunza are descendants of Alexander or his soldiers. 643 173

It has been related by many writers that the Hunzans are not by appearance an Asian people. To that I will subscribe completely. They are definitely, in 144

144 countenance and color, not Indian but European.

If you took the first ten Hunzans that you met anywhere and put them in Europe, no one could doubt that they were Europeans. With the exception of a few clearly and unmistakably Chinese-appearing Hunzans, practically each one would pass as a European. It is understandable that a bit of Mongolian blood got mixed in because Hunza is right smack on the Chinese border.

181 173 The people of this country are unqualifiedly the most energetic and industrious of all the people I came across in the East, which lends credence to the fact that they are of European origin.

173 643 174 Even before I went to Hunza I read carefully Arrian's *Life of Alexander the Great*. After seeing Hunza and being impressed by the conviction that the people of Hunza did appear to be Europeans, I came back and made a further search through the *Life of Alexander the Great*.

It is an historical fact that Alexander took unto himself a wife when he was on his Indian campaign. He married Roxana, the daughter of Oxyartes who was king of Bactria. Bactria is in the northern part of Afghanistan—right smack against the Hunzan border.

Alexander had a posthumous son with Roxana. His name was Alexander Aegus.

So the Mir's claim might have sound historical basis. The Hunzans claim to trace their history back about 2,000 years. Well, Alexander married Roxana back in 327 B. C. So you see, the story may have its point.

I'll further state that the Mir himself looked exactly like one would expect a Mediterranean European to look. He might feign a relationship or descendancy from Alexander the Great, but he couldn't feign that Macedonian appearance.

Then wherein lies the difference? What happened through the years to create the obvious difference that everyone sees and feels the minute he comes into the territory? I am not an anthropologist, nor have I training in any scientific field. Therefore, I am quite unprepared to speak with any degree of authority, but I am told the difference is that the people of Nagir accepted or welcomed strangers and settlers from other parts of the area and thus, they became a polyglot group of mixed blood, habits, customs, religions and thought, whereas the Hunzan people, then and today, discourage outsiders from coming to live among them in their country. Then, too, I guess another important factor looms and that is that Hunza is not nearly as inviting from an economic viewpoint to a man coming from another part of the world to settle, whereas Nagir does offer many more advantages.

For me to assert that there are no mixed bloods in Hunza would be an untruth, because even in my travels about the towns and along the road, I saw distinct types that were not of the run-of-the-mill Hunzans. Some were distinctly Chinese and I am also reasonably sure that there is a fair amount of Afghan blood among the Hunzans, besides Russian—for, as you may recall, Russia is but a scant 14 miles away.

It is not my intention to try to build up a case for true-bloods as being the Hunzan heritage, for history clearly indicates that it is among the people of mixed bloods where the greatest advances are made in science, industry and the creative human arts.

In Hunza there are very few plains or expanses where farming on a large scale could be practiced. However in Nagir it is quite different. There were sections through which we passed that were wider than the eye could reach, covered with good soil that was carrying

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

mentioned as being 100 miles long. 131

A few miles above the spot where the Hunza River meets the Gilgit is a village called Secunderabad. It is here that Hunza begins and if you follow the Hunza River up to its source beyond Misgar, almost on the Chinese border, where it springs from a glacier, you will find in following the contours of the river that the country is almost 200 miles long. I have carefully checked this figure with the best authorities—the Mir being one of them—and I found that the 200 mile figure was as close as it can possibly be measured. 133

They are Asians. Of course they are Asians because they dwell in Asia. But in appearance they are definitely unlike Asians. Without trying to sound dramatic or authoritative, the general appearance of the people of Hunza shows marked European characteristics. They are totally unlike the Indians, the Afghans or the Chinese. To me they looked like the Mediterranean peoples. At this stage I am not harping or relying on the fact that they claim to be descendants of Alexander the Great or some of his soldiers. 144

Primitive—Most writers refer to them as primitive people or say that their way of life is primitive. I will agree with the use of that term in describing the people of Hunza, if you will agree with me that the Christian world is primitive, because it too follows the teachings of the Bible which was written 3,000 or 4,000 years ago. It is agreed that the people of Hunza follow a primitive form of agriculture and use no chemical fertilizers or modern sprays and insecticides. But then, they don't need chemical insecticides and chemical fertilizers. They use no modern machinery on their small, hard won, shallow surfaced fields. Their conduits which guide the glacial waters to their fields are, I agree, primitive, but no better form is known anywhere. 105 105 241

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

105 where. They use water to turn the mill that grinds
[376] their bread and that is primitive. But many thousands of people throughout the world would say that it is the right way. The adroitness and the ability of the Hunzan men would match that of any people in the Western world.

I cannot say that I found anything about them that was primitive. Further, they can choose the modern way of life if they so desire it. But the only people who seek it are those who are forced to leave Hunza because of the shortage of actual living room.

511 *Poverty stricken*—One writer referred to them as being poverty stricken. If the beast of the fields and forests and the birds of the air are poverty stricken, then I guess we would have to admit that the people of Hunza are poverty stricken as well. If you want to feel sorry for birds, because they have to seek shelter in their unheated nests high up in the trees, where the winds blow around them, and because they do not have oil heating for their nests or motors for their wings as a sign of poverty, then I will be forced to agree with you.

As long as the people of Hunza are free, have a bit of land to till and a house of their own that is not mortgaged or tax-ridden and are in good health and attain long life, I definitely cannot accede that they are poverty stricken.

142 *Fair complexioned*—Now and then some author refers to them as being fair complexioned. I did not see one fair complexioned person in all of Hunza. Perhaps
[144] the writers meant to say that they were Caucasians, which is true, as compared to Orientals or Negroes. They are not a fair people any more than the Spaniards, Italians or Greeks are fair complexioned peoples.

805 *Precise, exacting*—An occasional writer sought to

4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir
Burush. AV7

nearly as lax in their Mahomedanism as the people of Hunza. There is considerably more cultivation than in Hunza, the land is better watered, and the main slopes of the mountains enclosing the country face north, and are consequently covered with forest. The land has the full benefit of the summer sun, and the crops are splendid. The untold profusion of the apricots, and the quantity of gold which can be washed out of every stream, has gained the country amongst the Nagaris themselves the name of "the land of gold and apricots." The people, though of identically the same stock as those of Hunza, show marked differences. They are less warlike than their neighbours; they were never implicated in the raiding of caravans, owing principally perhaps to there being no outlet to the north or east leading to caravan tracks; they are, on the whole, better off, owing to the better agricultural conditions, and the possession of splendid grazing grounds; and last, but not least, slavery is unknown amongst them — that is, they would not brook their king selling them or their children, and the exile of the present ruler's eldest son is said to have been caused by his attempt to introduce the custom from Hunza. The men are not so bright and cheery as their Hunza cousins; they strike one as more sedate and morose, and their reputation for dash and gallantry is far lower. The reason they themselves assign for the difference, and the one generally accepted, is that in the winter, when the sun is in the south, the great mountains backing their valley shut out all the light and warmth, of which Hunza facing south enjoys the full benefit, and that the depressing effect of passing day after day in the cold and dark-

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AV3 Dard AV3
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rocky ledges, sometimes letting oneself down nearly to the water's edge, then ascending 300 or 400 feet above the stream, holding on by corners of rock, working along rocky shelves 3 or 4 inches wide, and round projecting knobs and corners where no four-footed animal less agile than a wild goat could find a path. D 133

Immediately above the bend of the river is the district of Chaprot, consisting of the fort and village of that name and three other villages. This has always been a fruitful source of contention among the rulers of the three states of Hunza, Nager, and Gilgit, between which it is situated, principally on account of the fort, which, according to local ideas, is impregnable. It is situated in the angle formed by the junction of two streams, with high precipitous banks, and can therefore only be approached from one side. It has belonged in turns to all three states, but at present is garrisoned by Cashmere troops. Continuing up the valley to the eastward, at about 52 miles from Gilgit, the residences of the rulers of the two states of Hunza and Nager are reached, the river forming the boundary between the wild two. D 361 648 B 131 361

The view of the great Rakiposh Mountain from the north side is truly striking. From the water's edge it rises without a break for 19,000 feet to its topmost peak, which is over 25,000 feet above the sea-level. Its lofty sides, girdled with dark pine forest and seamed with glaciers and *mers-de-glace*, some of which reach nearly down to the water's edge, overlook numerous fertile settlements which are nourished by streams flowing from the great mountain. Above the forests extensive fields of snow sparkle and glitter in the summer sun, while, overtopping all, great points of granite, on whose steep sides the snow can scarce find a resting-place, give emphasis and unity to a scene not easily forgotten. B 133

Above Hunza the course of the river, which rises in the Hindoo Koosh, lies entirely in Hunza territory. The people of these two states, of whom so little is known, have been counted as mere robber tribes, who have brought themselves into notice by their depredations on the caravans between Yarkund and Leh. This is, however, scarcely a just estimation of them. They are of the same stock as the people of Yassin, Ponyal, and the majority of the people of Gilgit and the neighbouring valleys. So far from being mere robber tribes, they are settled agricultural communities, living under rulers who boast of their long unbroken descent from princes of native blood. Hemmed in by lofty mountains, they are B 721 B 144 B 173 186

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262 by them, not a single fowl is to be seen. These peculiarities
783 are strictly confined to the Shin caste, and, together with
[174] other customs which will come under notice presently, afford good grounds for supposing that they were a race of Hindoos who came from the south, and, pressing up the Indus Valley, established a Hindoo state in these remote regions under the crest of the Hindoo Koosh.

B The next in order and the most numerous caste are the
564 Yeshkuns, who form the entire population of Hunza, Nager,
162 and Ponyal, and nearly all the population of Yassin, besides
197 being numerically superior in Gilgit, Sai, Darel, and Astor. In Hunza and Nager they do not call themselves Yeshkun, but Boorish; and in Yassin, Woorshik and Boorisho. The language spoken, in slightly varying dialects, in these three states is known as Boorishki, Boorishaski, or Woorishki. The term " Khajoona," applied by the Gilgitis to the language as spoken in Nager, is never used in that country, and the old name also lingers in Yassin, which is still known as Woorshigoom. This language, of which an account is given in Appendix A, differs markedly from all languages in the neighbouring valleys. It has, I believe, been pronounced on good authority to belong to the Turanian family of languages.

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B In the colder climate of Hunza and Yassin, the people of
144 this caste have ruddy complexions, and fair and even red
142 hair is not uncommon. The Boorish of Nager show a somewhat different type. Many of them are short, thick-set men, with prominent cheek-bones, thick features, and thin beards. These characteristics, joined to their unwarlike nature, are probably due to an infusion of Tartar blood from Iskardo, gained during the time that Nager was subject to the Makpon ruler of Iskardo. If the Boorish are originally of Turanian origin, they have received at some time so large an infusion of Aryan blood as to have almost entirely swamped their original characteristics. Mr. Drew points out that the restrictions on their intermarriage with the Shins makes them the purer race of the two, and though these restrictions are not always closely observed, the Yeshkuns of Hunza and Nager would have little opportunity for profiting by their non-observance, so that their dash of Aryan blood must have been obtained before the appearance of the Shins. There does not appear to be any good foundation for Dr. Leitner's suggestion that the Yeshkuns are probably the product of intermarriage between the Shins and some aboriginal race.

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000 Considerable rivalry exists between the Shins and Yeshkuns,

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by the Ghalchah tribes, that is, those belonging to the first group, appear to be sprung from ancient Persian (Zend), those of the third group show greater affinity with the Sanscrit. But Zend and Sanscrit being sister languages,[1] a relationship is shown to exist between the two groups. The Khowar language, as has already been mentioned, shows affinities with those of both groups, and will be found, I believe, to constitute an intermediate link between the two.

The Yeshkuns, or Boorish, of Hunza, Nager, &c., must be classed separately from all the three groups, though they have now, perhaps, nearly as much Aryan as Turanian blood in their veins.

Conjecture is permissible as to the events which brought these tribes into their present localities, although the actual facts must remain unknown. Some idea also may be formed as to the order in which these events happened, but anything approaching to exact chronology is utterly unattainable.

It is generally agreed that Badakhshan and the upper part of the Oxus Valley was one of the earliest homes of the Aryan race. Their progress southwards was probably gradual, and at first more due to natural expansion than to any desire for conquest. As they came to occupy localities of greater fertility in a more genial climate, their number would naturally increase more rapidly. Warlike expeditions on a large scale would become possible, and each step in advance would be taken with greater confidence. In the tribes of the first, or Ghalchah, group may probably be recognised the descendants of those who remained settled in their original locality, and who, in latter times, were gradually driven up into the narrow valleys where they are now found. In some instances, as in the Ludkho Valley, they crossed the great range and settled on the south side of it at a comparatively recent date.

The tribes of the second and third groups I take to represent those who migrated southwards at the earliest period. Of these a certain number must have settled in the ground first occupied by the emigrants, leaving the more energetic to push on further south. In the Kho and the Siah-Posh, I would recognise the descendants of these first settlers who, after crossing the Hindoo Koosh and exterminating or driving before them the aboriginal inhabitants, remained in occupation of the hill country down to an elevation of about 2,500

[1] Muir's Sanscrit Texts, Vol. II, page 266.